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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6630
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7609
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9118
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUN LIMA 5189
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 004677

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/29/2017

TAGS: KJUS PGOV PINR PREL PTER CO

SUBJECT: NEW DEFENSE MINISTRY DIRECTIVE PROHIBITS USE OF
DEMOBILIZED PARAMILITARIES IN "RED DE COOPERANTES"
INFORMANT NETWORKS

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.

Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos issued a June 21 directive banning the incorporation of demobilized individuals into the "red de cooperantes" (voluntary informant networks) run by the military and police. Charge Drucker and OAS Observation mission (MAPP/OAS) head Sergio Caramagna had voiced concern to Santos that the participation of demobilized paramilitaries in the networks fed the perception of collusion between the security forces and paramilitary groups and undermined public confidence in the military. The directive requires military and police officials to verify the new requirements are being met, and also prohibits the carrying of weapons or wearing of uniforms by network members. End summary.

Background: "Red de Cooperantes"

¶2. (U) The GOC created the "red de cooperantes" program in 2003 to allow citizens to voluntarily contribute information on illegal activities or armed groups to authorities. A majority of network members are farmers, ranchers, taxi and bus drivers, businessmen, and demobilized paramilitaries. The GOC considers the network a vital intelligence tool. From 2003 to May 2007, over three million civilians participated in the network, and the GOC reports it captured more than 3,000 criminals and armed group members based on network information.

(Note: Ministry of Defense Directive No. 16 (September 24, 2003) defined the network as, "a system in which a citizen voluntarily commits to contribute to his/her own security, through solidarity and cooperation, participation, and collaboration with authorities in the provision of truthful, confidential, and timely information." End note.)

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New Directive Answers to Growing Concerns

¶3. (U) Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos issued a directive on June 21 to improve the operation of the networks. The directive orders that: 1) members of the network cannot use military or police uniforms or be used as "guides" for military operations; 2) military and police officials must verify that network members are unarmed; and 3) military and police officials cannot incorporate demobilized persons into the networks. The directive names Vice Minister of Defense Sergio Jaramillo as the GOC official responsible for the network.

¶4. (C) The directive was issued in response to concerns raised by the Charge and MAPP/OAS Director Sergio Caramagna over the use of ex-paramilitaries in the network. Numerous community leaders had complained about the participation of ex-paramilitaries in the networks, with some claiming that ex-paras were exploiting the networks to continue their criminal activities. Charge and Caramagna stressed to Defense Minister Santos that public perception of collusion between the military, police and ex-paras undermined GOC efforts to increase confidence in the security forces and the paramilitary demobilization process.

Preventing Problems

¶5. (C) OAS/MAPP Director Caramagna told us the lack of clear guidance on how to operate the networks led to different

interpretations by local military and police officials. He explained that residents in some regions saw participation of local ex-paras in the network as a threat. For example, residents in Cordoba told MAPP/OAS Mission officials some former paras used the networks to continue criminal activities, set up new criminal groups, or to intimidate victims. Cordoba Police Commander Col. Jaime Velasco confirmed the police had arrested a member of an emerging criminal group, Los Traquetos, who had infiltrated the local network. Similarly, San Jose de Apartado human rights ombudsman Ruben Diaz said former paramilitaries had used the network to set up the new criminal group known as Renacer. Caramagna told us the new directive clarifies the rules and will remove an important source of abuse.

Drucker